

Boeing Settles Ethiopian Air Case Ahead Of \$28M Verdict

By **Lauraann Wood**

Law360 (November 12, 2025, 5:01 PM EST) -- An Illinois federal jury awarded more than \$28 million on Wednesday to the estate of a United Nations environmental scientist who died in the 2019 crash of a Boeing jet flying Ethiopian Airlines Flight 302, even though the parties reached a settlement ahead of closing arguments.



The estate of crash victim Shikha Garg had asked the jury to award her husband between \$80 million and \$230 million for her experiences in-flight and the effect on him, while Boeing argued that \$12 million was more reasonable. (Fabrizio Gandolfo/SOPA Images/Sipa USA)(Sipa via AP Images)

The estate of crash victim Shikha Garg had asked the jury earlier Wednesday to award her husband Soumya Bhattacharya between \$80 million and \$230 million for everything she experienced in-flight and how it has affected him. Boeing argued an award closer to \$12 million was more fair and reasonable, as the estate's request would essentially punish the company over a tragic accident for which it has already accepted responsibility.

After hearing the verdict, however, Shanin Specter of Kline & Specter PC reported that the parties settled the case before delivering closing arguments earlier Wednesday morning.

The development caps off **about a week** of evidence jurors heard regarding the March 2019 crash, which occurred less than seven minutes after takeoff.

Garg's case is the first civil suit to reach a jury over the crash of the Boeing 737 Max 8 jet, which

happened five months after the crash of Lion Air Flight 610, which killed 189 people in similar circumstances. The consolidated Ethiopian Air litigation is proceeding before U.S. District Judge Jorge Alonso, who has set previous trial dates in the case but eventually called them off as the cases settled.

The jury's verdict includes \$10 million for Garg's pain and suffering and emotional distress alongside \$3.45 million in agreed economic damages for Bhattacharya, \$5 million for his loss of society and another \$10 million for his grief, sorrow and mental suffering. The parties' settlement adds 26% in prejudgment interest to that total, bringing the total recovery to \$35.847 million, according to a statement Bhattacharya's attorneys issued after court.

In the statement, Specter and Kline & Specter partner Elizabeth Crawford said "we and the family are gratified by the jury's verdict," as "it provides public accountability for Boeing's wrongful conduct."

A representative for Boeing told Law360 in a written statement Wednesday that "we are deeply sorry to all who lost loved ones on Lion Air Flight 610 and Ethiopian Airlines Flight 302."

"While we have resolved the vast majority of these claims through settlements, families are also entitled to pursue their claims through damages trials in court, and we respect their right to do so," the statement continued.

Boeing attorney Daniel Webb of Winston & Strawn LLP told the jury during closings that his client's \$12 million damages recommendation included \$1 million for each of the final two-and-a-half minutes in which its plane experienced "significant turbulence" that would have unquestionably made Garg and other passengers grow fearful over their experiences.

Beyond the parties' agreed \$3.45 million in economic damages, the recommendation also included \$700,000 for each of the five years that passed before Bhattacharya remarried in 2024 and \$2.5 million for his grief and sorrow, Webb said.

Garg would also be entitled to damages for her in-flight pain and suffering, but trial evidence proved that wasn't part of her flight experience, Webb told the jury. Boeing's expert testified at trial that every passenger was wearing a seatbelt in the flight and that the magnitude and duration of gravitational forces on the plane, considered alongside available medical literature on this topic, "clearly shows it's highly unlikely that anybody including Mrs. Garg ... experienced any physical injury or pain on this plane," Webb said.

Conversely, Garg's estate didn't present "a single speck of evidence" regarding any pain and suffering she may have experienced, Boeing's attorney argued. The expert who testified for Garg's estate regarding those so-called G-forces' physiological effects "tried to say the whole flight was a disaster," but "that's just not true," he told the jury.

Specter argued during closings that his suggested range more accurately encompassed the damages Bhattacharya has already experienced since losing "his person," as well as those he will continue to face well into the future.

For instance, Boeing's \$2.5 million recommendation for grief and sorrow damages would translate to about \$62,000 for each of the seven years he's already grieved and the additional 33 years he's expected to live, Specter told the jury.

And Boeing's \$3.5 million suggestion for Bhattacharya's loss of society would equate to just \$1.50 a minute, or \$90 an hour, Specter said. "You can't get a plumber for 90 bucks an hour, much less a loving spouse," he told the jury.

"That's a ridiculous amount of money, ridiculous," the attorney argued.

Specter also blasted Webb's characterization that the Ethiopian Air plane was experiencing turbulence before it dove to the ground at nearly 600 miles per hour from about 6,000 feet in the air. The characterization was simply "a diversion" to distract the jury from the fact that Boeing caused the crashing jet's unsafe conditions, he told the jury.

"It was never turbulence," Specter argued.

Boeing accepted liability for the Ethiopian Airlines crash in November 2021 as part of a stipulation that

paved the way for the families to collect compensatory damages under Illinois law. The families could claim loss of economic support, loss of consortium, pain and suffering and emotional distress against Boeing, among other things, but they agreed not to pursue punitive damages.

In the litigation, Boeing is accused of taking shortcuts in safety in pursuit of profits as it rushed the design and development of the 737 Max and an automated feature that affected the jet's flight handling and controls, the Maneuvering Characteristics Augmentation System.

Accident investigators and official review panels have since determined that the MCAS was vulnerable to faulty sensor readings that could trigger the system and push the plane into a nosedive. Following a 20-month global grounding, the Federal Aviation Administration cleared the 737 Max to fly again in November 2020 after Boeing developed a software fix and enhanced pilot training.

Garg's estate is represented by Shanin Specter and Elizabeth Crawford of Kline & Specter PC and Joseph Power Jr. of Power Rogers LLP.

Boeing is represented by Dan Webb, Linda Coberly, Christopher Essig, Julia Johnson, Samuel Zuidema and Sandra Edwards of Winston & Strawn LLP and Christopher Ledford, Mack Shultz and Jon Buck of Perkins Coie LLP.

The consolidated case is In re: Ethiopian Airlines Flight ET 302 Crash, case number 1:19-cv-02170, and Garg's individual case is Garg v. Boeing Co., case number 1:19-cv-05079, in the U.S. District Court for the Northern District of Illinois.

--Editing by Emily Kokoll.

Update: This article has been updated with more information on the settlement.